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GUIDANCE DYNAMICS AND THE COUNSELING PROCESS IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

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DESCRIPTORS- *ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELING, *COUNSELING FOALS, COUNSELING THEORIES, GUIDANCE PROGRAMS, *COUNSELOR CHARACTERISTICS,

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER IS--(1) TO DISCUSS THE RATIONALE, VARIABLES (VARYING ELEMENTS), AND OBJECTIVES OF THE GUIDANCE FUNCTION IN EDUCATION, AND (2) TO FOCUS ON THE COUNSELING PROCESS IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS AND CONDITIONS OF GUIDANCE COUNSELING ARE PRESENTED. CONTENT VARIABLES (SUCH AS DATA ABOUT PUPILS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHOICES POTENTIALLY OPEN TO THEM) AND PROCESS VARIABLES (SUCH AS ASSISTING PUPILS IN CHOICE-MAKING THROUGH PURPOSEFUL INDIVIDUAL ENCOUNTERS OR PLANNED LEARNING RELATIONSHIPS) ARE EXAMINED. THE GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDANCE FUNCTION WITHIN AND BEYOND FORMALIZED INSTRUCTION ARE DISCUSSED. VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE COUNSELING PROCESS IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ARE EXAMINED--(1) UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS, (2) CONDITIONS AND PROCEDURES (INCLUDING THE MAKE-UP OF AN EFFICIENT COUNSELOR), (3) GOALS, AND (4) POSSIBLE UNIQUE FEATURES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELING. (RD)

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Guidance Dynamics and the Counseling Process in the Elementary School

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The Interpersonal Dynamics of Guidance

As one of the aspects of the total curriculum, along with subject matter areas, the guidance function has its own distinct content or substantive elements. These essentials, as in other academic fields, rest upon philosophical, psychological and organized knowledge foundations. Guidance, rather than postulating its own independent theory, is multi-disciplinary in origin and employs theories, methods and approaches from various sources, such as learning theory, personality theory, and sociological findings. The elements which comprise the interaction process (dynamics) constitute the core activity upon which the procedures, operations and mechanisms or "hardware" of guidance are based. The discussion which follows examines the rationale, the variables (varying elements), and the objectives of the guidance function in education.

Underlying assumptions and conditions

The rationale for the unique characteristics of the content of the guidance function is predicated upon the provision of certain types of educational conditions as well as on assumptions both philosophical and psychological in nature. Current thinking as to curriculum content at all educational levels embraces the concept that the school is now responsible for an extended range of experiences reaching beyond formalized academic goals. The broader aims now encompassed by the total school program

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include not only intellectual education, but emotional and value education. While still stressing the cognitive aspects of learning rooted in subject matter mastery, schools are increasingly aware of concomitant aspects of human development, i.e. those dimensions emphasizing feeling and valuing. Competency as a goal is broadly defined to include not only intrinsic motivation for understanding the principles and content of knowledge exploration, but the fusion of knowledge applied to cultural and interpersonal relationships, as well as personal growth in everyday living. Guidance activities have emerged as one aspect of the educative process having a primary concern for individualized learnings in relation to personal decisions, value judgments and emotional concerns.

Psychologically, it is an accepted principle that individuals normally seek environmental experiences that tend to be self-actualizing. In this process the broader concern is the person's relationship to society, i.e. how individual needs can be met and reconciled with the values and behaviors expected by society. As the individual faces day to day choices or seeks to remove environmental restrictions, the basic concept of interaction, of relating internal, personal factors with external conditions (required skills and knowledge) is at work. The school, recognizing this reciprocal relationship, cannot permit an experiential dichotomy to exist, but must offer opportunities for the integration of symbolic (intellectual, academic) learning and personality formation. As the individual translates a stimulus into a perception and hence a response an intervening process or dimension is present. This dimension of learning interrelates the handling of judgments and information concurrently with the responsiblity for feelings. The balance sought is between skill in examining what one thinks about what one feels is important, and how one feels about what one thinks is important (Powell, Stone, Frank). The core process rests upon an inter-dependency between cognitive and affective modes of responding to and assimilating experiences (Biber).

In terms of philosphical assumptions, the guidance function postulates the dual nature of man, as being not only a reasoning, analytical and conscious person, but a meditative, affective and artistic individual (Northrum). The term "rationality" is used by Scheffler, who, referring to Kant, suggests the expression as inclusive of both intellectual and moral life, or both the formalistic and humanistic emphases in education (Scheffler).

John Dewey proposed the notion that genuine education should be based on a philosophy of experience, characterized by interaction (internal and external influences) and continuity. Such an education relies heavily upon the assumption of an intimate and necessary relationship between the processes of actual experience and education. Personal experiences, to be educative, must be of immediate and of long range relevance and must also have continuity between past, present and future experiences (Dewey). The aim of education, individual freedom in behalf of worthwhile purposes, is best met when subject matter is used for and subordinated to the personal growth of the learner, thus achieving a truly liberal education, or education which liberates (Wilhelms).

Content and process variables

The dynamics of the guidance function as an emphasis in the educational process include both substantive elements and process factors as content variables (varying elements). These operate within the total curriculum design, but in addition require certain supporting characteristics for maximum effectiveness.

The curriculum, or total stimulus setting and source, forms a structure within which the guidance function can be implemented. The commonly accepted bases for the curriculum are the individual, societal demands, organized knowledge, and values of the culture. The composition of the curriculum pattern as well as the nature of its individual components constitute a variable since the setting and learning climate

enhance or limit opportunities for guidance efforts. Of equal importance, however, are the two basic or substantive elements which comprise the essential content variables in the guidance function. These are (1) data about pupils and (2) data about environmental choices potentially open to pupils. The rationale for these two content variables rests upon the assumption that as individuals make choices, they select from environmental situations or experiences open to them. Hence, any helping agent or service requires information collected, organized, and appraised about pupils and about environmental outlets. Normally, situations calling for these two data sources focus on education-vocational or social information needs as opposed to personal-perceptual concerns. These latter require self examination primarily at the feeling level.

The process factor

Another variable is the process factor which in importance ranks equally with the two content variables, pupil data and environmental opportunities. Essentially, the process variable operates as a third force for pupil self exploration in relation to various choices by means of individual (one-to-one) contacts or through group experiences. Although the pupil might make an appropriate choice of various environmental possibilities through introspective study based on an examination of obtained information or self sought experiences, the guidance function more frequently assumes human intervention. Thus the process variable functions through helping relationships, i.e. purposeful individual encounters or through planned learning relationships, within or beyond the formalized curriculum. A key element in this process of pupil assistance is a purposeful experience which, through the concept of interaction, permits mutual examination of environmental conditions by a helping person and the pupil. While one purpose of some helping relationships may be to obtain and interpret environmental information other situations may stress an examination of self and reality perceptions as factors in personal growth experience.

Possibly the most significant principles underlying the process variable in the guidance function are "internalization" and "valuing" - two interrelated aspect of decision making behavior. Internalization draws upon the notion that man learns both through conscious and "pre-conscious" associations, with perhaps a greater use of the latter (Kubie). This "subliminal" learning approach suggests that much of man's awareness or intake of factual data about the world is done on a non-conscious basis. This heavy emphasis upon the feeling elements in transactions of living implies that the more lasting inner growth or personal experiences result from the emotional impact of learning associations. Internalization, or the acceptance of principles and attitudes as part of one's self, is based upon intrinsically rewarding behavior. This condition in turn leads to an autonomous value structure, a vital outcome of the guidance process.

The choice making process per se

Valuing, although an aspect of internalization, is more concerned with the choice making process per se. Assuming that pupils must make constant choices of beliefs, attitudes and purposes (values) the process variable in guidance must include a valuing component. This element, properly employed, leads to releasing the capacity of the individual for self directing, intelligent behavior. Since values are by nature personal, experiences which develop values must be characterized by such criteria as: (1) available alternatives, (2) free choice of alternatives, (3) choices based on thoughtful consideration of alternative consequences, (4) prized or cherished decisions, (5) publicly affirmed purposes, and (6) values incorporated into one's behavior and life (Raths). Essentially, valuing as part of the guidance process stresses pupil opportunity for awareness of, acceptance of, preference for, and commitment to a value(s). An important aspect of the valuing experience is the opportunity for having and making real choices, observing models, making errors and correcting actions.

Guidance function within and beyond formalized instruction

While not part of the content variables comprising the guidance function, certain supporting educational characteristics lend strength to its development. Implicit in this discussion is the dual idea that pupils are aided by the guidance function both within and beyond formalized instruction. It is also assumed that various school and community resources are available and coordinated for referral purposes. Finally, it should be recognized that the guidance function while primarily focusing on direct pupil interaction or assistance may similarly offer professional information and services to teachers, administrators and parents who also have responsibility for and impact on pupil behavior.

Objectives of the Guidance Function

The content and process elements inherent in the guidance function must be viewed in the light of the aims of the guidance effort. In terms of the school, the intermediate objectives focus on the provision of facilities, services or resources, as well as assistance in the development of a learning atmosphere which facilitates pupil choice-making in regard to value judgments, attitudes, or life plans. As a broad objective, the guidance function makes a unique contribution to the total school program through its emphasis on the personal, feeling, and valuing aspects of pupil experiences.

This general goal can become explicit through immediate steps which provide the following conditions or activities:

1. Collecting, organizing, and recording a variety of data about pupils.
2. Supplying information, both on individual qualifications and on environmental choices, to pupils, teachers and administrators.
3. Providing opportunity for assistance with decision making concerns -- vocational, educational, personal-social to pupils (and teachers, administrators) individually and in group settings.
4. Acceptance and application of approaches to learning both in formalized

instruction and beyond which intergrate the intellectual (objective, external) with the affective (subjective, internal) processes of human development.

"Sense of freedom" as an objective

The intermediate general objective of the guidance function for the pupil centers upon acquiring a sense of freedom in understanding and applying the choices and values. In behavioral terms a progressive hierarchy of interaction levels might extend from "being aware," "responding positively" and "preferring a value," to "conceptualizing a value" and "adopting a philosophy of life," whether applied to personal concerns or to educational-vocational problems (Karthwohl, Bloom, Masia).

Ultimate aims of guidance

The ultimate aims of the guidance function expressed as societal outcomes stress a psychological and social maturity with respect to relationships with the individual's culture or society. Types of development sought include maturation in (a) personal effectiveness, (b) social relationships, (c) self-intergration and directions, and (d) value orientation (Mathewson). In terms of the goals of education which are frequently endorsed (White House Conference, 1960) the aim of "individual self realization" is highly compatible with the broad purpose of the guidance function.

Ultimate aims for the individual as a result of guidance efforts to release human potential can be characterized by behavior which is purposeful, includes successful use of the valuing process, and results in self autonomy through a consistent outlook in personal, academic and occupational living.

The Counseling Process in the Elementary School

Assumptions

Although the present discussion focuses on the counseling process as one way of implementing the guidance function, many other means are available for reaching this same objective. Without supporting activities, including appropriate educational

viewpoints and personnel involvements, with teachers and others, it is unlikely that counseling alone could adequately attain the guidance function objectives in the elementary school. By the same token, the goals of the counseling process are certainly compatible with the guidance and overall educational objectives for the total school program. Assuming these relationships, it is understandable that opportunities exist both within and beyond the classroom for one to one and group contacts which, under proper circumstances, can be identified as counseling.

Counseling occurs under a variety of conditions

It should also be assumed that counseling takes place under a variety of conditions. Some of these may well include all of the ideal elements of the professionally trained counselor, i.e. extensive pupil data, planned scheduling and comfortable privacy of counseling quarters. It can also be taken for granted that elementary school counseling is as much a function of the person, setting, and relationship as it is of the administrative or policy structure, the designated functionary, or the formal training, role and title of certain individuals.

Teachers may do counseling

If seen as an inherent aspect of the guidance function, counseling may be the responsibility of both the elementary school counselor on a regular basis and of the classroom teacher on occasion, depending upon her qualifications and the circumstances. Two of the most important variables in elementary school counseling are (1) the helping individual, (his values and orientation) and (2) his approach to effecting behavior changes in others.

Counseling Goals

The goals of the counseling process in the elementary school, while not easily circumscribed by particular areas of pupil concern, appear to focus on four types of problems: (1) self understanding and awareness, (2) social acceptance and identification,

(3) academic intergration and success, and (4) career orientation and values. In terms of content goals, the purpose of elementary school counseling seem to be compatible with counseling at other educational levels; i.e. increased accuracy of self perception, more accurate environmental perception and greater congruity between self and environmental perceptions. Process or outcome goals include both immediate and long-range objectives. The former stresses current client understanding and happiness. The latter emphasizes future growth and development in relation to personal objective resources. In the elementary school, the primary content goal appears to be provision of an atmosphere which is conducive to the free exploration of the materials and resources available to the individual in the light of this own abilities, interests, and personality, i.e. the freedom to will to know. Phrased differently, it is freeing the life process for its own most adequate fulfillment. For elementary pupils the long-range process (outcome) goal is one of replacing adult and external purposes with internalized human values.

The Helping Individual

More than technique or clear cut methodology, successful elementary school counseling depends on the personal characteristics, value structure and professional skills of the counselor (or teacher). Probably the most important personal quality is that of openness to new experiences, acceptance of others, and awareness of the available perceptual field. Combs and Soper have categorized the perceptual organization of effective counselors in the following fashion:

1. With respect to their general perceptual orientations: good counselors will be likely to perceive:
   a. From an internal rather than from an external frame of reference.
   b. In terms of people rather than things
2. With respect of their perceptions of other people; good counselors will perceive others as:

a. Able rather than unable.

b. Dependable rather than undependable.

c. Friendly rather than unfriendly.

d. Worthy rather than unworthy.

3. With respect to their perceptions of self; good counselors will perceive themselves as:

a. Identified with people rather than apart from people.

b. Enough rather than wanting.

c. Self-revealing rather than self-concealing.

4. With respect to purposes; good counselors will perceive their purposes as:

a. Freeing rather than controlling.

b. Altruistically rather than narcissistically.

c. Concerned with larger rather than smaller meanings.

Qualities which free others to learn

The value structure or philosophical orientation of the helping person, according to Raebeck, should include a humanitarian attitude based on faith in mankind, interest and trust in others, a flexible philosophy of personal and social life, and a relatively deep rooted understanding and acceptance of oneself. These viewpoints, if effective in helping contacts with pupils, should result in a sensitivity to the subtelties of personal relationships in all human interactions as well as an understanding of his own needs for self fulfillment through self expression and self awareness of his pupils. To free others to learn, the helping person tends to be non-authoritarian and open to new experiences related to his own needs and defenses.

The professional skills of the elementary school counselor, while based on a sound comprehension of the school as a social system, and the dynamics of individual behavior must center upon a repertoire which permits an accurate assessment of pupil needs and characteristics and a range of assistance measures for bringing about suitable

behavior changes. As related to the personality of the counselor, the ability to listen and identify meaningful pupil cues with affective features is one of the most important qualities. Responding in a manner which permits frank review of the pupil's action but clearly reveals acceptance of the child as a person complements the listening skill of the counselor.

The Counseling Process

The process of developing a helping relationship with an elementary school child rests upon several basic assumptions, accepts certain goals, and relies upon a variety of procedures. Beyond the problem areas cited earlier that serve as a classification for children's concerns, certain fundamental needs are also postulated. Most psychologists agree that children have needs for belonging, for close and physical contact, for achievements, for communication, and for freedom with limits. It can also be assumed that each child is engaged in a search for himself and ways to live authentically in the world. Moustakas (1966) cites three sources of sickness or types of experiential disengagements that make attainment of this objective difficult: (1) betrayal of universal values, (2) betrayal of self values, and (3) betrayal of unity and wholeness.

In a positive vein, Moustakas suggests both individual and environmental conditions for authentic growth. In the former category, he includes freedom of being, capacity to make choices which are positive or negative for self growth, and the child's sense of responsiblity for being true to this own self; environmental conditions consist of the confirmation of others, providing opportunities and resources (for expression and tendencies) and the authenitc presence of adults.

The goals of the elementary school counseling interaction can be globally stated as (1) to free the child's potential to react freely and individually with his environmental experiences (Raebeck) and (2) to utilize personal expression in assisting the child to recognize, express, actualize, and experience his own uniqueness

(Moustakas), or assist in the development of preconscious processes (Kubie). The objective of the helping person is to assist the child in the process of learning more adequate self perceptions by helping him in the interpretation of his experiences so that his own intrinsic nature is given creative individual expression. The basic element is a personal relationship, which rather than depending on manipulation or objective behavior analysis and accountability, fosters an atmosphere of self exploration and results in meaningful self enhancing experiences related to attitudes, values, and beliefs.

Effective counseling: a phenomenological look

The procedures accompanying an effective counseling exchange with an elementary school child center upon attempts to see what an experience means to the child in relation to his own self perception. Based on the assumption that learning is a result of change in personal meaning, the chief approach must involve an atmosphere in which the child feels free not only to examine the significance of his own experiences but is given the opportunity to choose new responses and thus reorganize his experiences, voluntarily. Since the psychological climate is the chief medium for behavior change, specific procedures are less important than the orientation and interaction skills of the helping person. THe entire process must focus on human involvement, based on a one to one intrinsic experience which is largely affective, internally derived, and maximally expressive for the child. Thus, the variety of human responses which can produce this type of setting is almost limitless, however, the acceptance, warmth, and openness to awareness on the part of the counselor are vital components. Certainly, a teacher or counselor must be critically alert to his own psychological defenses as well as the extent of his willingness to let others be themselves if he hopes to establish a climate in which a child can feel accepted, understood, and free to explore life.

Possible unique features of elementary school counseling

Although both research and practice are necessary to confirm the distinctive value of particular procedures uniquely applicable to elementary school counseling, several such operational approaches can be tentatively suggested. A basic advantage often accruing to the elementary school counseling situation is the stimulus of an opportunity open to those fortunate elementary pupils who find themselves the center of one to one encounter with a helping individual.

Other, more limiting differences also distinguish elementary counseling efforts. Because of the subleties of the communication process, greater reliance on non-verbal cues and counselor structure may be necessary. Too, the ambiguity of the relationship with variable tempo, affect and content may require greater flexibility and sensitivity on the part of the counselor. Specific techniques, such as play materials or other media, may be useful as energy occupiers as the child verbalizes his concerns in a free expression situation. Initially, because of the naivete of the counselee, more oblique or indirect overtures may be useful in opening conversational avenues. Since the amount of affective material may exceed that for higher educational levels, the corresponding reflection of feeling may require greater symbolization or interpretation due to the limited vocabulary of the clients.

Finally, the assessment of outcomes, while they may be more obvious in some instances, are likely to demand more developmental data and research efforts than with cases where educational or vocational decisions furnish some evaluative evidence.

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